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ABSTRACT

The central cause of the present sorry state of governance in many institutions is an historical misunderstanding as to the real nature of a college or university. Most institutions have inherited a formal organizational structure founded on the concept of hierarchy, a concept that is totally unsuitable to the needs of an institution of higher education, where power does not reside at a single source at the top, but in varying proportions in three or four groups. Proposals for modification of governance include: (1) the establishment of a new mechanism within the institution to make possible community-wide participation in governance; (2) making explicit the redistribution of authority that has been taking place; (3) the strengthening of leadership to maintain the college or university as a viable institution; (4) the establishment of means to enforce accountability with every extension of authority; and (5) the modification of the traditional structure of high school, junior college, 4-year college, professional and graduate schools. These proposals go a considerable way toward devising a system of governance designed to facilitate the engineering of consent. (AF)

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GOVERNANCE: INTERACTING ROLES OF FACULTY STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS*

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Higher education is embroiled in change -- change made manifest by confrontations on the campuses, by vacancies in the offices of president of more than one hundred institutions, by the financial difficulties of a third or more of all colleges and universities, and by the persisting criticism voiced in the daily press, in the state legislatures, in the Congress, and in the streets. It profits no one to contend that this campus turmoil is the consequence of social forces the university neither caused nor can influence -- the persistence of war, the racial revolution of the 60s, urbanization, and technological advance. The change goes on, and it is bringing about marked alterations in the structure of colleges and universities and the processes by which they are run.

It is said that "on a clear day one can see forever" but the day is not clear enough and I am not brave enough -- or at least, not foolish enough -- to predict what the governance of the university will be like in, let us say, 1980.

It is possible to point out the central cause of the present sorry state of governance in many institutions. And it is possible to appraise the rash of reforms being proposed in the light of the root cause. Hence what I will do is to identify five proposed modifications in the ways colleges and universities govern themselves or are governed, assess the logic on which each is founded, and piece together a rationale as to the course which the evolution of governance is taking.

An Obstacle to Modernization

The central cause of the present sorry state of governance in many institutions is an historical misunderstanding as to the real nature of a college or university. Most American universities inherited a formal organization structure founded on the concept of hierarchy. That concept presumes that all authority is granted by the founders or the public by means of a charter to a governing board at the top. Theoretically, such a board has all authority and the power to exercise it. And, as the theory goes, the board delegates authority to a president who is to direct and supervise all activities. He, in turn, delegates authority to deans, department chairmen, and administrative officers.

If this hierarchical structure fit the college or university of the first quarter of this century, it was because in that bygone era: a) the trustees and presidents could indeed comprehend the whole body of knowledge their institutions were transmitting; b) the faculties were made up of men content to sit on the proverbial other end of Mark Hopkins' log rather than men dedicated to or consumed by the rat race of research and publication, and the mobility that goes with it;

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c) the institutions tucked away in their rural fastness were indeed autonomous rather than subject to a variety of demands for services for the larger community; and d) the students, even if bright, were a supine lot, coached not to "stick their necks out" either by venturing their own ideas or by failing to conform with the beanie hat for freshmen, or other prevailing customs.

There was a time when the hierarchical structure, with authority concentrated at the top, did work for most institutions. Now, when the simple teaching institution located in a pleasant college town has become a large, complex, multi-functional institution that houses professors possessing greater specialized expertise and economic status, and more sophisticated students -- the hierarchical structure that looks like and was copied after the structure of a business enterprise simply does not fit.

It does not fit because power -- the power needed to exercise such authority as a law or a charter grant -- does not flow from a single source on high as the hierarchical structure implies. In a corporation, power flows from the stockholders or it has passed to the managers of the enterprise; in either event, it flows from a single source on high and it can be delegated down. In a college or university, all power -- that is, to repeat, the capacity to make decisions -- does not reside in a single source at the top. It resides simultaneously, and in varying proportions, in three and sometimes four groups that make up the institution -- the trustees and administrators, the faculty, the students, and sometimes the alumni -- and it flows in various directions.

In short, as an organization, the college or university differs -- and differs fundamentally -- from the business enterprise or the governmental bureau or agency. It differs in the degree to which power flows either from one source or from multiple sources.

Proposed Modifications

With this basic thought in mind, let us now look at five proposals -- each of which seems to be gaining some degree of acceptance -- as to how the structure of college and university governance should be modified.

Proposal #1 -- New mechanism should be established within the college or university to make possible community-wide participation in governance.

A variety of such mechanisms are actually being established. Students are being named to committees to sit with faculty members and/or administrators and others in formulating decisions on a broad variety of questions. Faculty members are serving on a variety of administrative and trustee committees. And in a number of institutions (e.g., the universities of Minnesota and New Hampshire, Pennsylvania State and Princeton) new councils, senates, or assemblies have been established to regularly bring together representatives of each of the factions that share power in the university to discuss a wide range of issues requiring decision, to confront each other with their respective views, and to offer the president and trustees such advice as they can hammer out in debate.

The reasoning underlying the proposal that such a council, senate, or assembly is needed rests on the fact that the college or university must be recognized for what it is -- a political community. By "political community" is meant that the institution is made up of several factions, each of which possesses parochial views and the power to disrupt or endanger the institution's operations. Decisions that will stick (i.e., that will harness the zeal or at least win acceptance) can only

be made through a process in which the several factions are consulted, can voice their opinions, and exercise an influence commensurate with the competence they bring to each particular decision.

Such mechanisms are beneficial in that they take out of the president's office the interaction between students and faculty, between faculty and administration.

But the perfecting of such mechanisms requires that further agreement be hammered out as to:

1. Who shall be represented on such a council, senate or assembly (e.g., the librarians? the teaching assistants?);

2. How, and in what proportion, shall each faction be represented; and

3. What authority the council, senate, or assembly shall have (i.e., what range of issues will they be authorized to consider and what weight will their decisions have?)

Proposal #2 -- The redistribution of authority that has been taking place within the college and university needs be made explicit.

It is obvious that the relative power to make or to exercise authority has been shifting within many institutions. Briefly, trustees and presidents have been losing power to exercise the authority that theoretically is still theirs. And faculties and students have been gaining power and, hence, gaining effective authority.

This redistribution of power creates a current and especial need for the redefinition of the authority of each faction of the trustees, of the president and his administrative staff, the faculty, the students, and the alumni. This process of redefinition, initiated in many institutions during recent years, promises to reduce tensions if it succeeds in bringing about an open-minded reappraisal of the role of each faction.

The broad goal may well be to place authority for the making of each kind of decision involved in the governance of an institution where the required competence exists. By competence is meant not only knowledge of the particular issue, but a recognition of the concerns of the whole institution. The goal should be to require that those who are given authority to make decisions shall simultaneously be expected to consult continuingly with each faction concerned with or affected by the decisions.

Those guides -- competence and concern -- can make feasible the kind of reappraisal that is needed. Such redistribution of authority is neither simple nor pleasant when it requires those who have had authority -- particularly the trustees and the faculty -- to cede it to others. And it is made doubly difficult by the necessity of accepting the idea that educational decisions (e.g., who shall be admitted, what shall be taught, or how well it is being taught), financial decisions (e.g., how the institution shall invest its endowment and how it shall allocate its resources), and other decisions are of concern to and can be improved by the participation of all or several constituencies.

Proposal #3 -- If the college or university is to remain a viable institution, the leadership needs be strengthened.

In the face of the obvious decline in the power of university and college presidents and in the face of the earlier abdication of power by trustees (who simply recognized their incapacity to make decisions as to the educational, research and many service activities of the institution), one may well recall the words of two distinguished presidents.

Douglas McGregor, after several years as president of Antioch during which, as he subsequently wrote, he strove "to operate. . . as a kind of adviser" to the faculty and staff "to avoid being a 'boss,'" concluded that: "It took a couple of years, but I finally began to realize that a leader cannot avoid the exercise of authority any more than he can avoid responsibility for what happens to his organization? Kingman Brewster of Yale complemented this thought when in a speech to the Yale Political Union in September 1969 he advanced his thesis that the president should be free and be expected to make decisions on a wide range of issues boldly, promptly, and decisively -- always knowing that he will be held accountable by students as well as faculty and trustees.

Brewster's comment clarifies the real nature of the president's office: that of a political leader. The president's task is that of maintaining the interest, support, and loyalty, and giving leadership to the several factions that make up the institution. The president can be an educational leader only if he is effective as a political leader of the whole academic community. The strengthening of the office of the president also requires, however, a reaffirmation of his authority and a restructuring of his staff to enable him to carry the responsibility for academic leadership and for student relations, as well as for general administration and for acquiring needed financial support.

The reasoning underlying current proposals for the strengthening of leadership, even while the authority of students is expanded and that of the faculty broadened and affirmed, rests on pragmatic bases.

Institutions of higher education are large and complex. They will not run themselves. And they should not be run to serve the whims of faculty members, or the experimentation of students. These institutions are established and supported to benefit the whole society, and all decisions must be tested in the crucible of the public interest. The interests of either faculty or students do not necessarily coincide with the public interest. It is not feasible that all should decide everything or even that each faction should be consulted as each issue arises.

To ensure that the institution is run in the public interest and with reasonable economy and efficiency, requires strong and effective leadership by those who are thoroughly cognizant of the institution's whole functioning -- educational philosophy, educational methods, costs of instruction, facilities required, interdisciplinary relationships, and the relative emphasis to be placed on research and on social services of various types.

If trustees are to measure up to the exercise of such leadership, most existing boards need to be reconstituted. Their membership will have to include more youthful members, women, blacks, faculty members, and students. Without such broader representation, the boards are ill equipped to translate the society's current concerns to the institution, to make decisions founded on an understanding of the educational process and on an intimate understanding of the capabilities of the

institution, or to interpret and defend what the college or university is doing (e.g., providing legal services for the poor) unless it knows that such service is being provided and how it complements the educational function.

Proposal #4 -- Every extension of authority must be accompanied by means to enforce accountability.

Whatever form of governance exists must produce results that are acceptable to the several constituencies within the college or university. If the students are given complete authority for student life, the environment they create must, in the long run, be considered suitable to facilitate learning in the opinion of the faculty and of those who provide financial support. By the same token, if the faculty is delegated authority for control of admissions, of curricula, and of the certification of educational accomplishment, its members must expect to be held accountable -- by students as well as by administrators, trustees, professional groups, and their peers. The participation of students on departmental "advisory committees," and their "rating" of faculty members and of courses are obvious manifestations of the enforcement of such accountability.

If the president is granted full authority in the matters pertaining to the institution's administration (as circumstances dictate he should), then he must expect to be held accountable -- not only by the trustees, but also by the constituencies he serves, and particularly the faculty and the students.

This fact, which has been obscured by our conventional addiction to concepts of hierarchy inherited from corporate and governmental organization, lies at the root of suggestions that the president's services be evaluated at stated periods and that he be asked at that time to continue or to leave. The nub of these proposals is:

A. that the quid pro quo for the reaffirmed executive discretion granted the president is a periodic (e.g., 5 or 7 years) reappraisal of his performance by the whole community he serves, and

B. that establishment of such a formal arrangement will stimulate regular, widespread and serious consultation by the president in the carrying out of his responsibilities.

Proposal #5 -- The traditional structure of high school-junior college-four year college-professional and graduate schools should be modified.

The same social forces that lie at the roots of the redistribution of power within the college and university -- the society's greatly increased dependence on advancing technology and on specialized skills, the drive to equalize opportunity for all hitherto less privileged people, urbanization and growing affluence -- challenge long-standing institutional arrangements in higher education.

The present structure (dating back to the time when only a small and select part of the nation's youth were being educated for the professions of law, medicine, theology, and teaching) has been expanded to train a vastly greater and less select number. Simultaneously, it has been extended to perform the research and provide the services the society now demands from the university. But it has been little changed and many of the new institutions -- community colleges, state colleges, and regional universities -- have tended to ape both the programs and the structure of long-established prestigious national universities, instead of

framing programs and structure applicable to the needs of their new and different constituencies.

New developments -- which should not be perhaps listed again before a knowledgeable group such as this one -- are altering the landscape of higher education today and call forth suggestions for the logical restructuring of this country's system of higher education. Only last week, many of these suggestions were spelled out forcefully in a report issued by a nine-member panel headed by Frank Newman of Stanford. Stressing the urgent need "to break free from the conventional wisdom" the panel deplored the fact that the nation's higher education system "with its massive inertia, resists fundamental change, rarely eliminates out-moded programs, ignores the differing needs of students, seldom questions its educational goals, and almost never creates new and different types of institutions."

Among its recommendations, the Newman task force called for:

- new types of colleges and special-purpose institutions
- off-campus study ventures such as tutoring centers and "regional television colleges"
- flexible systems for earning credits and degrees (including the development of equivalency examinations)
- increased college enrollment for all age groups
- internships and other non-college opportunities for young people
- restoring campus autonomy in statewide system.

Governance on a Clear Day

Obviously, the welter of change that is visible and the suggestions for restructuring that have been advanced, do not provide a neat and comprehensive plan for the reordering of the total structure of higher education. Such a plan will not likely emerge and less likely be achieved.

What is needed at this point in time, is a hard-headed, open-minded, and thorough evaluation of the five proposals for the modification of college and university that seem to be gaining some measure of consensus. "For too long," as the Assembly on University Goals and Governance has pointed out, "colleges and universities have borrowed their governance from business and public administration."

Recent years have demonstrated that the governance of colleges and universities cannot be founded on a structure that relies on the authority to command -- be it by trustees, a president, or a state coordinating board. The foregoing proposals go a considerable way toward devising a system of governance designed to facilitate the engineering of consent. When that clear day arrives -- on which we can see forever -- it will, hopefully introduce a new structure that will distill the best from each of the five proposals I have depicted. Only a complete system of governance thus evolved will be capable of ensuring:

--that freedom of thought and expression for teachers and students alike is maintained;
--that the knowledge and skills found on university campuses is applied to society's problem; and
--that the bold and effective decision making, essential for institutional management , is the order of the day.